



# Our Government Relations Program

This month I want to talk about the SNM's government relations program. Last June the SNM/American College of Nuclear Physicians (ACNP) Joint Government Relations Committee (GRC) met to update and revise its priorities and goals. The committee set 6 top goals, which were unanimously endorsed by the SNM Board of Directors, for their activities over the next 2 years:

- **For the FDA:** To expand our relationship with the FDA through the activities of the FDA Nuclear Medicine Coalition, by inviting the FDA to become a regular participant at the SNM annual meeting, and by reaching out to the patient advocacy community.
- **For the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS):** To aggressively work to expand coverage for nuclear medicine procedures, radiopharmaceuticals, and diagnostics and to improve payment for PET and PET/CT.
- **For Congress:** To secure ongoing funding for a National Radioisotope Production Program; to reinstate Title VII training programs; to secure \$2.5 million in funding each fiscal year for nuclear medicine resident training; to secure a long-term solution to highly enriched uranium (HEU) export issues; to expand Capitol Hill visits in spring 2005; to hold congressional briefings on nuclear medicine and PET-PET/CT.
- **In Training and Education:** To increase congressional and executive branch support for the training and education of nuclear medicine physicians, technologists, scientists, radiopharmacists, and other molecular imaging professionals.
- **For Outreach:** To actively participate in, or create where necessary, activities that can promote nuclear medicine to decision makers, patient advocates, provider groups, the press, and the public at large, including the expansion of the State Health Policy Liaisons program; to create opportunities to work with the National Institutes of Health (NIH) on the NIH Roadmap; to cultivate nuclear medicine champions in key executive branch agencies.
- **For the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC):** To keep the level of NRC regulation for nuclear medicine appropriate to the level of risk presented; to liaise with Conference of Radiation Control Program Directors (CRCPD); to work with CRCPD to foster Agreement State review of the recently published *NRC Guide for Diagnostic Nuclear Medicine and Radiopharmaceutical Therapy*.

In addition to implementing activities and infrastructure in support of these goals, the SNM leadership, staff, and council have been working on a variety of issues at both the

state and the federal levels. We are reviewing the FDA's Revised Guidance Document and coordinating our response with the FDA Nuclear Medicine Coalition response. We are also working with the FDA on the Radioactive Drug Research Committee and on biomarkers. We have successfully secured CMS approval of Medicare funding for PET for dementia

indications and for the development of new billing codes for radiopharmaceuticals, which will facilitate the collection of data that will let us build a clear case for better reimbursement. We are carrying that success forward in pursuit of other tangible goals.

Other items on our radar screen include Part 35 Training and Experience Requirements at the NRC and the Department of Energy (DOE) National Radioisotope Program. We are continuing our efforts in support of HEU export by expanding the Council on Radionuclides and Radiopharmaceuticals/SNM/ACNP coalition efforts. We continue to support the national push for licensing of nuclear medicine technologists, and we are keeping an eye out for "dirty bomb" legislation that might adversely impact our access to vital isotopes.

We are working with our Publications Committee and *JNM* editors to respond to the NIH proposal to provide free and immediate access to publication of research sponsored by NIH ("open access").

Bob Waters, our legislative consultant for the past 2 years, and his team have joined forces with the law firm of Gardner Carton & Douglas, a prominent Washington firm with extensive expertise in health care, reimbursement, FDA, NRC, and DOE issues as well as a comprehensive understanding of the legislative and regulatory process. We are pleased that Bob will continue to be representing our interests.

I am also pleased to announce that we have a new director of public affairs to coordinate our government relations efforts. SNM has secured the services of Hugh Cannon, who has worked for decades on Capitol Hill. His experience ranges from congressional staff to presidential aide to director of federal regulation for a pharmaceutical company to deputy director-level positions with the FDA, Health and Human Services, Small Business Administration, and Office of Management and Budget. I am delighted to welcome him and his wealth of experience to our organization. ❀



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